

AGN. NO.

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

FEBRUARY 4, 2014

**IMPLEMENTING THE PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BLUE RIBBON  
COMMISSION ON CHILD PROTECTION**

In an effort to seek an independent review of the obstacles to effectively execute much needed child safety protection and reforms, the Board of Supervisors (Board) by a motion on June 18, 2013 created the Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection (Commission). After several months of presentations, document review, focus groups and testimony, on December 30, 2013, the Commission provided an Interim Report to the Board with key findings and recommendations to improve child safety and prevent child maltreatment fatalities.

The Commission has provided this Board with recommendations in two areas where child safety can be positively affected. Citing the need for a cultural and structural shift to a multidisciplinary system of shared responsibility for foster youths, the report delineates three specific recommendations in the area of law enforcement and health that will have a positive and immediate change on child safety.

**MOTION**

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**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS**  
**FEBRUARY 4, 2014**  
**PAGE 2**

In the area of law enforcement, the Commission found that there is a need for more training on the handling of child safety cases, more aggressive and consistent enforcement of every child abuse allegation and consistent cross-reporting to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) accordingly, the Commission recommends that:

- Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) cross-report every allegation of child abuse to DCFS.
- The District Attorney serve as an oversight entity for all law enforcement agencies across Los Angeles County to ensure that every child abuse allegation is cross-reported as required by state law and ensure that the Electronic Suspected Child Abuse Reporting System (E-SCARS) is fully utilized by all relevant agencies and with appropriate support to be maintained and enhanced, if necessary.
- LASD or the Probation Department is co-located in DCFS offices to increase the speed of background checks for relatives and non-related extended family members.

In the area of health, the Commission noted many symptoms of child abuse or neglect can be found in medical and developmental issues. When such issues of abuse are not addressed, serious injury or death can occur. It went on to state "given that fatality risks are most pronounced for children reported to child protective services

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS**  
**FEBRUARY 4, 2014**  
**PAGE 3**

during their first year of life, this is likely a period during which service interventions are most impactful and protective”. Consequently, the Commission recommends that:

- The current County-wide medical hubs developed through a partnership between the departments of Health Services, Mental Health and DCFS be utilized to screen, prior to placement, every child under one year of age whose case is being investigated by DCFS;
- A Public Health Nurse is paired with an Emergency Services Worker and together go out to investigate a referral of abuse or neglect for all children less than one year of age.

*DCFS agrees with every one of the Commission’s recommendations.* In a letter dated January 23, 2014, DCFS agrees that establishing a multi-disciplinary and interdepartmental child safety vision with multiple departments taking the lead would further enhance the County’s child protection safety net.

The Commission has given this Board a feasible and viable plan of action. Through the implementation of these recommendations, this Board has the opportunity to immediately address child safety in Los Angeles County.

**I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

1. Instruct the Directors of the departments of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Mental Health (DMH), Public Health (DPH) and Health Services (DHS), with the assistance of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and within each departments' current resources, to collaborate and develop a protocol to ensure the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendation that every child under one year of age detained by DCFS be pre-screened at a medical hub prior to placement be implemented; and designate DHS as the lead entity to ensure that the protocol including timelines for implementation is completed. The Director of DHS shall report back to the Board in writing within 45 days;
2. Instruct the Directors of DPH, DHS and DCFS, with the assistance of the CEO and within each departments' current resources, to collaborate and develop a protocol to ensure the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendation that Public Health Nurses and the Emergency Services Workers together investigate any referral of abuse or neglect on a child under one year of age be implemented; and designate DCFS as the lead entity to ensure that the protocol be informed with relevant data and implementation timelines be completed. The Director of DCFS shall report back to the Board in writing within 45 days;

3. Request that the District Attorney develop the necessary protocols with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) and other law enforcement agencies to ensure that every child abuse allegation is cross-reported as required by state law and ensure that the Electronic Suspected Child Abuse Reporting System (E-SCARS) is fully utilized by all relevant agencies; and request that the District Attorney or her representative report back to the Board in writing in 45 days;
4. Request that LASD collaborate with the Probation Department and DCFS with the assistance of the CEO on a plan to address the Interim Report's recommendation that law enforcement co-locate within the DCFS offices to facilitate the completion of background checks of potential caregivers for the placement of foster youth; and report back to the Board in writing in 45 days regarding the feasibility of implementation including budgetary considerations.

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